

The Club: A Crash Course in Filmmaking

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

By

Bobby Bennett

**Thesis Advisor
Rich Swingley**

Signed

**Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana**

May 2016

Expected Date of Graduation

May 2016

SPC011
Undergrad
Thesis
LD
2489
.24
2016
.B46

1

Abstract

A pair of identical twins, a masked vigilante, a business duo, and a grieving sister happen upon a mysterious control room that lets them see through the eyes of anyone on their college campus. This story, told in five chapters, unfolds these characters' intertwining stories as they each come to terms with how they make use of the mysterious room. Included in the project are the finished screenplay of *The Club*, a completed excerpt from the film, and a written analysis of the writing and filming process.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Rich Swingley for advising me in this project and showing patience as I took risks. He was more than happy to provide any resources, such as access to equipment, to help take on the project. His advice in taking on such an ambitious project made this finished project possible.

I would like to also thank Barb Stedman for her advice along this process as well. She also showed great patience and encouragement in letting me take risks while giving me some helpful direction as I figured out what was most realistic to tackle.

A very huge thanks goes out to the cast and crew for embarking on this project with me. Cameron McMullen, Kelsey Johnson, Austin Mason, Nick Rieth, Abigail Mitchell, and Lawrence Matusiak, the film's cast, showed great enthusiasm and patience working with me and sticking with this project. I'm very thankful not just for the work but for the friendships that have begun and grown. I thank and treasure my crew as well. Dan Anderson, Sadie Lebo, Greg Cox, Felicia Keen, Abby Urbik, Nicole Lehrman, Adrian Blackwell, Becca Davila, and Kenton Little. Their willingness to help even on short notice and in the late hours of the night meant a great deal to me and made this project possible.

AUTHOR'S STATEMENT

The Goal of the Thesis

With this project I aimed to finish a screenplay and complete as much of the filming in one semester as I could. In other words, I set out to do something big. I don't mean "big" in some incredible, revolutionary way that would garner the attention far and wide. Instead, I mean "big" for a senior Telecommunications major wanting an excuse to push his creative abilities to the limits. I therefore chose a project in which I could try my hand at things both familiar and unfamiliar. It really would be a crash course in filmmaking, and I won't lie. I hoped, even foolishly, to finish the film in a semester. Whatever came of it, though, I knew the point of this project was the process. In a short period of time, what could I accomplish individually but also with a team of friends? I've heard creativity is oftentimes about problem solving and this project certainly had its to be solved. Finishing a short film in a semester is tough enough, but a film nearing a runtime of an hour? Going through the motions wouldn't cut it. Plans needed to be devised, tried and revised if I wanted any chance at finishing. What you will read ahead is an account of my decision to just go for it. I knew whatever happened, lessons would be learned and growth would take place. I didn't want to waste an opportunity to go for something safe (no matter how tempting). This project was a chance to see what I and a team of friends could accomplish in an art-form we love and hope to pursue the rest of our lives.

Where It All Began

This thesis was not my original idea. My whole first semester, and even the summer before, I had enthusiastically thrown myself into an ambitious project involving animation, music, and theology. The project was to be a test of what I'd hope to pursue with the rest of my career, bringing my Christian faith to life on screen in a thought-provoking and engaging story. Specifically, I would have used animation to illustrate a visual metaphor involving not only visuals but also music in a way integral to the themes. I just wanted to get people thinking about God while enjoying the magic of what filmmaking can accomplish. The problem was I had too much I wanted to say and come Christmas break I had nearly a hundred pages of ideas written out but no clear backbone for a plot. Every time I took a step forward it felt like I took two steps back. Just too many puzzle pieces that wouldn't fit together and I seemed to lack the skill in sorting them out. So, with much thought and counsel I decided I'd make a dive and jump ship. But I only jumped knowing there was another ship to swim to.

This new ship requires some backstory, though. Let's rewind to the night David Letterman came to interview filmmakers Spike Jonze and Bennett Miller. It should come as no surprise that I left Emens auditorium inspired. Much of the two filmmakers' advice bounced around in my cranium, one being from Spike which went something like "just go make stuff." Pretty simple, right? Well, I planned to take Mr. Jonze up on the challenge and film something that night, whatever it may be. Fortunately, my friend Cameron McMullen was up for joining and so off we went.

We had no story. Just a camera, Ball State's campus, and as much time as we were willing to take during a school night in the cold autumn weather. After wandering around campus we eventually ended up at the parking garage next to Woodworth because of a certain

character we would find there. That character is, well, hard to explain because I'm still not even sure what it is exactly. But I can tell you what it looks like. Wall-E. It's like a small, one-armed cousin of the lovable Pixar character and it stands guard at the entrance to your everyday parking garage. Since my freshmen year, I had wanted to make something with this curious object frozen in place, passed by hundreds of people oblivious to its existence. It had so much character and some kind of poetic air about it. So that night when Cameron and I were searching for a story, it didn't take long until the light bulb went on in my head and I found a way to weave the little robot into our movie.

Now, that little project went absolutely nowhere. I cut it together and was pleased with the shots overall, but there still wasn't much of a story. Nevertheless, that little exercise in "just making something" arguably became the seed for what is now my thesis. A few days after we filmed, I was excited to show Cameron what I had cut together. We then bounced ideas around for fun in a game of "what if." It felt like we struck gold. Drawing on the *The Chronicles of Narnia* and Spike Jonze's very own film, *Being John Malkovich*, the concept incorporated the little Wall-E look-a-like into a compelling concept that could potentially go in a hundred different directions. That concept went something like this: What if this strange object that goes unnoticed by people everyday actually holds a door on its back that magically leads into another world? What if that world was a rather unexciting control room, one that held a computer monitor? That monitor, once turned on, showed a person's point of view. Building off that, what if that person's POV was just one channel? What if there were hundreds, even thousands of channels that showed the POVs of everyone on campus? Then, what if you not only saw but heard as well what they heard? Even better than that: what if you also heard their thoughts? You basically could be in someone else's head! Moreover, what if you could also rewind these

channels into the past? Talk about getting in someone else's shoes. Like I said, this concept could branch out in countless directions but the process had at least begun.

Now fast-forward to that Christmas break when my original thesis idea still was struggling to make it off the ground. The thought of switching had only been a joke, especially since I didn't know what I'd switch to. While I was catching up with some filmmakers who've been in the industry awhile, I ran by them a premise for the animated of my prior thesis idea. While they found different parts exciting, it became clear just how little I had to offer in terms of a concrete story. So, I also pitched the robot idea to them just for the heck of it. They seemed to like it and even offered up some further advice. For one, if I chose to stick with the animated piece it'd be a lot of me, myself, and I. I planned to do most, if not all the work. Acting, animating, editing, music, sound. I don't know if it could've been accomplished, and even if so, at what price? The life of a hermit didn't sound appealing to me. Also, there was lot of pressure in doing a religious piece. I wanted to justice to something I cared about greatly and so moving forward felt impossible at times. I was afraid I'd make the wrong step. Consequently, this new idea, albeit lacking in any apparent spiritual or deep thoughtful themes from the get-go, seemed like a breath of fresh air. A live action film also meant I could return to doing cinematography, one of my favorite roles in filmmaking. A second piece of advice I had received dealt with this question: what do I want to do with my career? Directing, I had said. Well, then learning how to direct actors might be important. It being my final semester in college, surrounded by friends and actors, also meant this would was my final shot at getting more experience directing. As far as I knew, this might be my last chance to attempt a project like this in the safety net of college.

Something else happened that Christmas break. I saw *Inglorious Bastards*. This film was great in my mind for many reasons, but the writing. The writing blew me away. I loved how such

an epic tale could be boiled down to a handful of "chapters." Each would contain anywhere from one scene (the opening) to a few back to back. While a film may normally have 40-60 scenes, this had just a few that developed multiple characters and raised suspense while effectively weaving several plots together into a satisfying and poetic crossroads of will and chance. When thinking of my own film, I've come to love the idea of weaving multiple characters' stories together using unexpected chance and differing agendas. It could better serve a story with a concept so open-ended as mine. More ground could be covered. Plus, I liked the idea of doing a longer piece, and therefore using multiple chapters was not only a unique way in telling a story on screen but also a practical one. It seemed much more feasible to have five chapters, each containing two locations or scenes rather than dozens upon dozens as in a typical film. Writing and filming an hour long piece in one semester was already crazy enough so I needed to help myself out where I could.

I created a rough idea of what the story would be, who the characters were, and where it could all end up. Although I still had much ground to cover, I was miles ahead of my previous thesis idea. Like I said, there was a better ship to swim to and this gave me hope. In keeping with the jumping metaphors, though, my advisor upon hearing my new pitch put it this way: "you're jumping from the frying pan into the fire." He was right. I had naively gotten myself into something arguably more ambitious. In the process of changing to this new thesis project, I was advised to promise only a realistic amount. While my intention is to finish the darn thing, I took the advice to be realistic. What did I know I could accomplish? I ended up deciding on finishing the script, filming as much of it as possible, and turning in an excerpt of the finished cut to show how the story translated from paper to screen.

WRITING PROCESS

(I recommend reading the script beforehand)

Alright, so the project is a go and I've got a script to complete. Five chapters. Five main characters. The ability to access anyone's mind and past via an old computer monitor in some secret control room. What would be the genre/tone of this piece? Serious? Whimsical? Comedy? Dark comedy? Should there be narration? Maybe it'd be like *Amelie*, some all-knowing narrator that would fill us in on details seemingly random and unnecessary that would still nevertheless paint life as the unexpected, whimsical mess that it is. Comparatively, would this story be a character piece? Fully focused on the development of each person's arc as they intertwine? Or would this film center on the concept, the characters serving as devices to illustrate various themes and points? With a plot device such as a mysterious monitor dropping us in the shoes of anybody, all sorts of themes could be tackled. What would you do if you had access to the mind of anyone? Maybe you can find out what that special someone really thinks of you (if anything at all). Or perhaps you could collect well-protected secrets from friends. Maybe even those in power (who wouldn't want to give the CIA a run for their money?). Or this could be your chance at getting in the shoes of that beloved family member who for some reason continues to make those horrible life decisions. What is it they're thinking? Or perhaps you would like to make a profit off of such a unique source of information. Heck, you could completely subvert everyone's expectations and decide you hate the whole NSA vibe this computer carries. You're going to destroy it! Burn it to cinders! By now you get the idea. The list of options could go on and on.

When it comes to creating something I like to start with what I'd genuinely like to see as an audience member myself. If I'd be excited to watch it, I'd be excited to make it. But how do I decide if it's something I'd like to see? Sometimes it's an intellectual reason, such as hoping for

a story with a thoughtful twist. But sometimes it's purely a gut reaction to an idea that just seems to click. I believe one's "instincts" or "gut reactions" get shaped by experience. Now having studied films and made a handful myself, I believe I can trust the instincts and tastes I've developed thus far to lead me in some exciting directions. But sometimes that gut feeling starts off vague, with a general sense of the *effect* I'd like to have on the audience. To name an example, I *wanted* the audience to have fun with the concept but also get their brains churning as they wrestled with the themes and ideas (whatever those themes were). I enjoy movies that do that so why wouldn't I want to make one myself? I also *wanted* them to be amazed by the complex intertwining stories of multiple characters (of course, given I knew how to weave such a plot). I also *wanted* a grand climax that wove all stories seamlessly together into an unexpected twist of events that also said something profound. That's not too much to ask, right? I've been learning that dealing with these vague goals as guidelines or principles rather than as starting points can help a lot. You know the trees for the forest metaphor? Well, it's almost as though I had actually missed the trees instead while shooting to capture the forest.

But of course, some ideas hit me crystal clear. Shot for shot I could almost see the movie play out in my head. All I had to do was go film it now. One of those scenes (and one of the earliest I imagined up) was in Chapter 1 when Preston first enters into the control room and then not long after he has to hide as we meet two other characters entering, Nick and Wayne. As Preston hides behind the stairs the two characters flip through the channels and eventually to the surprise of all three of them, they land on a channel in which they're looking at the back of their own heads. It's Preston's channel! Preston, scrambling to figure out what to do next, cleverly decides to close his eyes. This of course turns the screen black. The two characters then make for the stairs to catch the trespasser at which point we push forward to the monitor. It suddenly

flashes to life again as Preston opens his eyes. From Preston's POV we see our protagonist is somewhere else as his two pursuers find that no one is hiding behind the stairs. I fell in love with the scene and how the rest of the chase would unfold. I then went ahead and built the rest of the scene outwards from this point. Conceptually, and especially as a cinematographer, I also fell in love with the scene in which Preston saves Sue from her attacker. Although the actual filming turned out differently, I wrote the scene originally to be told mainly through shadows. Sue's shadow would walk into view on a gritty brick alley wall, soon to be followed by the intimidating figure of a man's shadow. Tension would rise and soon enough the man would attack her, the whole fight unfolding on the wall as the shadows dance across the brick. Then Preston enters in vigilante garb and mask to take care of business.

A third and final example is the scene in which Simon rehearses his song on stage, unaware that the three masked figures of Preston, Nick, and Wayne fight over his fate. Now, this scene had a few different versions. One involved an actual crowd, another involved a fight taking place while crowd-surfing, and another version which became what is written in the script. As I will elaborate upon later, various limitations such as logistical problems and story logic led to what this scene would eventually become. But I worked hard to hold to the original idea. After seeing *Whiplash* which so wonderfully brought the music to life with its quick cutting and dynamic cinematography, I've been dying to film something with a music performance. I play guitar and so finding a musician was already taken care of. Plus, the concept of weaving a fight scene between masked characters during the performance just seemed so cool for lack of a better term. Preston, Nick, and Wayne facing-off was a shout out to the finale of *The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly*. But to put an ironic twist on it, the source of the music would actually be the center of their feud. Now, that's a scene I wanted to write and shoot.

In this writing process, two factors that also played major parts were time and filming. When going into production it's usually recommended the script be finished beforehand. Actors definitely appreciate that. Of course, I thought it would have been. Starting the semester out, I had a few versions of a full story in mind. Some parts were murkier than others, but nonetheless I was confident the story would continue to work itself out since I had already laid a foundation. This was just one of the many lessons I was reminded of: never assume. The script isn't written until it's written. But having just started this new project and having little time, I found myself needing to begin the filming just as I was finishing the writing. So I moved forward with what I had when I could. For example, Chapter 1 was fairly set in place and so it was the first to be filmed. But then, due to filming schedules already set, like the guitar scene in Pruis Hall, we'd start to hop around from one chapter to another. As we continued to film, I'd stick with those scenes I had originally fallen in love with. They were like dots already drawn, but connecting them to each other was the challenge.

Story logic and motivation often were the questions I had trouble answering in a satisfactory way. For example, one of those illusive answers was how to end the story. I knew I wanted that auditorium scene with Nick, Wayne, and Preston facing off against the backdrop of Simon's guitar playing. But what were the motivations that got them all there? Why were they still after Simon in the first place? Would Sue be present? Why or why not? Why was Preston facing off against them? Was he protecting Simon or did he intend to cause harm? Question upon question, all hinging upon other answers. I needed to know how Chapter 3 would unfold to have answers to how Chapter 5 would unfold and vice verses. It was like a slide puzzle solver or a Rubik's cube. Every decision was interconnected and making one move always decided at least five others you could or couldn't make. As the process continued I tried to make decisions that

left me with the most options later. One of the pitfalls of this approach (and obviously there were many) was I often leaned on ambiguity and generality. A scene that was too specific might be harder to later reconcile with if I decided to change the story. For example, when writing the showdown scene I decided it would not be the final scene of the film, thus giving me room to wrap the story once I figured out the previous chapters that had yet to be finished.

The process marched along at a slower pace than I would've guessed and hoped for, and as it did certain questions popped up again and again. What did I know? What kind of story would this be? Was this a character driven story in which we meet various characters and follow them to the end of their arc? Or was it falling more into a slice of life style story, each chapter only opening us up to the world of each character and leaving us with no conclusion on their arc? Perhaps I should go for a piece mainly focused on the concept which the characters, no matter how developed, would serve to illustrate. Ultimately, to answer this question I had to constantly see which pieces were laid already and which ones I could afford to fit in. I think what I found was a story that'd combine a mixture of all three aforementioned types of stories. This is very much a concept piece that hopefully scratches the surface of some large themes, such as whether we can change those we love. But this main theme is attached to a main character, such as Sue. The rest of the characters, I guess you could say, were secondary characters. But their purpose was to do more than just serve the main character's arc. I had hoped each character brought something interesting or entertaining to the table, even if we never saw them develop further.

To go into further detail, I eventually decided our main character was Sue. We meet her early on, someone who quickly flips the momentum of the story on its head when we found out she was the mysterious person who's taken the notebook. As she burns it in the fire we're introduced to her arc which takes place in the backstory. Sue was the kind of person who kept to

herself but as we find out through flashbacks and narration, she couldn't keep quiet when she found out what kind of decisions her brother was making. The control room provided her a way to step into the shoes of this person she loved but didn't understand. Like a miraculous answer to her prayers, she thought access to her brother's point of view could give her an answer on how to fix him. Sue breaks character and actually speaks up only to watch this backfire. Things only get worse between the two of them and before she knows it life plays a cruel trick and steals her brother's life in an unforeseen car accident. Now, Sue's left wondering what she could have possibly done. Could she have changed this person she loved? If not, what then should or could she have done? These question really stuck out to me and of all the directions this story could turn for I decided this was theme may resonate the most with the audience. While the tone of this film sways back and forth between dramatic and comedic, this would anchor it, I hoped. When we meet Sue she's in this place of limbo, without closure about what was to be learned. Instead she tries to just let go and put it behind her. But her character wasn't alone in searching for an answer.

I played with a lot of ideas on how to wrap this film up. What if we find out a deep dark past of Preston's character in which he's like the criminals that he serves justice to. By the end his goal is to expose himself for the fraud he is. Maybe he even writes his own crime in silver pen over his mask like he does to the perpetrators he fights. Or maybe we incorporate the mysterious origins of the control room. The audience must be wondering about that. But when I honed in on the theme of whether you can save/change someone you love, I entertained a somewhat crazy, and arguably clichéd idea: identical twins. What if Simon, everyone's target at the end, actually has a brother? I was already playing Simon so to save time finding and scheduling in another actor, I thought I'd make them twins. And what if Simon leaving out the

back of the Wall-E robot's back in Chapter 1 is actually his escape? But from what is he escaping? Well, perhaps that control room isn't just a control room. Maybe it's a bridge as well to another world. A bridge from our world to the world Garth and Simon both came from. And a harsh one at that! Perhaps Simon had happened upon this place sometime in the backstory. This time, however his brother noticed and decides to follow. Conflict arises between the brothers. Garth tries to convince Simon to stay. Simon has already decided he wants a chance at a better life and this supernatural bridge to some new world (ours) might be his shot.

Yes, it's a bit absurd. But what it brought to the table was that same kind of conflict Sue had dealt with. Garth wanted to "save" his brother from making a potentially "bad" decision, just like Sue. I took that main theme that I was very attached to and used it to create the structure by which the story would be told. The script would now start with a "preface" in which Garth follows Simon through their snowy, desolate world, to the control room. Then we'd pick back up later in Chapter 4 to show Garth and Simon's confrontation in the control room. This would also be intercut with Garth making a deal with Marv and the authorities of his world that planned to destroy the bridge. We'd also get the exposition on how Garth convinces Sue, Nick, Wayne, and Preston that they're in danger for finding out about the control room. If they find Simon and bring him back, they go free. With the table set, the final chapter would finally bring both Sue and Garth together. Sue's answer to her own past could be Garth's answer. Can he save someone he loves? Can he save his brother?

Originally, Preston would hold this answer, or at least *an* answer. In the scene following that which Preston saves Sue in the alley, both have an exchange in the control room. While Sue begins to open up, Preston being his usual self has little to offer as far as a verbal answer. But he does say something interesting: he doesn't think Sue could've saved her brother. Then later

Preston tells Sue that he “never said he couldn’t be saved.” Seems contradictory, right? Which is it Preston? Could her brother have been saved or not? Sue even asks him to elaborate. Preston responds by turning to the monitor and rewinding his channel back to some past date, a memory paused and ready to play. But at that moment Sue decides she’s had enough and chooses not to watch it. She just wants a verbal, straightforward answer. Preston doesn’t give her one. Then come the final scene between her and Garth, Sue turns to that very memory, perhaps out of some faint hope this may really be the answer she’s looking for. My original intent was for Sue to play it back, letting us finally into Preston’s past. This memory not only would hold the key to Preston’s character, mask and all, but also the answer to Sue’s question. Perhaps somebody did something to save Preston, without knowing whether it would work. The answer would be that to love someone is to love unconditionally, without expectation. Perhaps saving isn’t up to us, but we can only act with the hope that we’re vessels for change.

Because I had trouble thinking up a fitting memory for Preston, especially in time to film the scene, I took a more ambiguous route. Sue would again choose to not watch the memory. At this point, I think her character almost didn’t want an answer, at least not someone else’s. She stands up, admitting that through all this she still has no definite answer herself. Perhaps, her arc is a failed one. We hope she’d by now have learned something more concrete or helpful, or even learned what Preston’s memory had in store. But this is someone in the grieving process and I couldn’t think of an answer myself, as the writer. Is that a sign of bad writing? Perhaps. But perhaps that’s also a fitting answer to this tough question. What I want to say is I don’t know quite what to say. In a way, Sue’s arc was recognizing this and responding with action instead of solely with words. What she offers to Garth is to simply to be there for him. Although he’s a complete stranger and one that even lied to her, she sees a fellow human struggling with a very

human question. So Garth, just like Sue, must decide and stick with a decision, for better or for worse.

What was Preston, then, to this story? He's a mute, a masked vigilante serving justice, and some source of unasked for wisdom? Preston is honestly just a mystery. While I always wanted that air to him, I originally had a more concrete story for him in mind. As mentioned before, I wondered if Preston had actually done something horrible himself in the past. He fights for justice now, not to redeem himself, but to fight the evil he had seen in himself. He wanted to be exposed eventually for these unforgiveable sins. Perhaps, he would write on his own mask his past crime, revealing his backstory. Then Sue's arc would come as she tries to save him from himself and his own judgement. All of that was at least the idea. But instead I flipped the dynamic, erring on ambiguity. Preston remains a mystery now, perhaps a source of wisdom, but we never get a chance to really know for sure. What I like, though, is he's more than a plot device. A plot device helps move the story along, which he does. But we don't know for what purpose. He seems to have some secret purpose of his own that will likely have the viewer guessing. Preston basically offers another voice in this conversation about how to love those we want to save even if we can't. His answer isn't so much the focus as is Sue's choice to listen or not. It's her story. We don't know if she's a hero or antihero for her choice. She's just a person trying to figure life out and Preston is another person she could choose to learn from if she wants.

So when it's all said and done, what kind of story did we end up with? As an audience member, it's not something I've really seen before. In some ways that was a good thing, I think. For example, as far as genres go, it's a comedy at times, a superhero movie at others, a dramatic story of sibling conflict, and a fantasy/sci-fi with multiple worlds and a mind-reading computer. I

liked the idea of at least trying to write a film that would combine all these different genres. How would they or wouldn't they fit? In similar fashion, I also hoped to bring many different characters together, the control room being the common point. What would you do if you had access to someone else's mind? Each of their stories illustrates a different answer. Two businessmen want to use the information to do "good" while also selling a product. A sister wants to know if getting in someone else's shoes really is the answer to understanding them. A masked vigilante wants...well, we're not even sure.

The story also incorporates a strange balance of comedy, absurdity, and seriousness. The dynamic between Nick and Wayne cracked me up. One guy never talks and the other never shuts up. They have a bond in which they almost know what each other's thinking, maybe like two halves to a whole. I also thought it'd be fun to have not just one, but two mutes. How often do you have two characters that barely talk? Preston's character seems unassuming and harmless when we meet him in the first chapter, almost like a pushover. He gets yelled at, tied up, and interrogated. But then we find out he also goes out every night beating criminals into submission. I just found his character so ironic. One moment I felt bad for him and the next moment I was almost scared of him. Then we take characters such as Sue and the twins and there's suddenly a level of drama that pulls back in the other direction. Sue deals with some heavy things from her past as the two brothers deal with it in their present. To summarize, I don't know whether the mix of such different characters and genres worked, but I enjoyed giving it a shot.

Now, I had said some good things came out of this script, but this project was far from perfect. While aspects of this story excite me, the final screenplay, I think, reflects the process: somewhat of a convoluted mess. A bit harsh, I know. But I think it shows that I struggled to tie the story up in the end, a struggle whose roots had tangled into the fabric of the story. The

addition of the twins feels forced, in my opinion, although it gave some sort of structure to the story. Chapter 4, I think, is where the desperation to get from point A to point B may have surfaced. Garth explains how he not only found Sue, Nick, Wayne, and Preston but also convinced them to join forces to bring back his brother. This huge plot point is completely hidden in a few passing lines and it comes across a bit cheap. Another aspect that felt underdeveloped was the characters. As I wrote earlier, I tried to turn this into an intentional choice. The story would focus instead on the concept and the question that Sue and Garth face instead of developing each character's story. But I'm afraid it may leave many feeling empty and unsatisfied. Overall, the script was an effort that paid off in some areas but showed weakness in others. If things feel rushed, forced or incomplete, well it's probably because they were.

So what would I have done differently? I'm sure one answer is obvious: finish the screenplay before I started shooting. Check. Lesson learned. But if that doesn't go as planned, then what? That's where some learning can really start. That creative process of making decisions and moving forth was expedited in this short span of time. I constantly had to ask: which ideas should I nurture and which should I let die? Sometimes I wouldn't know until I backed myself in a corner and realized the only way out was to retrace my steps and start anew. In this process I do wish I had developed a better way to organize and keep track of all these ideas and the ones that worked. Oftentimes they floated around in my head and it would get easy to lose track.

Another question I eventually asked myself on a daily basis was: why should I still care? When ideas are fresh and you're first starting out, optimism is at its pinnacle. But as development (or lack of it) takes place and you either get tired of the idea or begin to see the problems with it, what makes you stick around? I mean, obviously the fact that this was my

Honors thesis gave me a pretty good incentive to stick with it. But still, as I wrote myself into corners and the hope for creating something amazing felt diminished at times, it was easy to start losing passion. This, I think was where some of the most vital lessons are learned. If this project was like a child, I've got to show it love no matter what. It may not be perfect. It may have some rather awkward and ugly phases. But it's mine and no one else is honestly going to give a damn about it. So, when the project at times would fail to inspire me like it once had, the passion had to come simply from the commitment to finishing it for the sake of finishing it. Maybe I had to learn the lesson Sue was learning herself. To save something you love, you just have to love it knowing you may fail. There's no guarantee your efforts will be worth it.

PRODUCTION

With the change of my thesis, I was excited and refreshed. I'd get to work with actors! I'd be back behind the camera! Being the largest project I've helmed to date, this project would be a summation of my college filmmaking experience, drawing on close friends and the skills I've worked on over the years. To say the least, there were high expectations going in. But as I've already discussed, this project was a chance to try anything. I could act in a role if I wanted (perhaps even two). We could shoot a "superhero" scene with a masked vigilante. We could see what the dynamics would be like between someone who never talks and someone who always does. It was fun imagining up these various scenes and ideas during writing, but then rubber had to meet the road and we had to figure out what it'd actually look like on screen.

One of my many character flaws is I often fall under the illusion that I need to know all the answers before I can act. Sometime I think creativity is like a tree, each of its branches leading to other branches and to other branches and on and on, all representing the countless choices that could be pursued. But which one is the best to choose? I'd have to follow each to its end before I could possibly know! But this project didn't allow me that luxury to overindulge my perfectionism. Under these time constraints I realized I wouldn't get anywhere if I were too slow to act. Our first weekend of filming, which was the first scene in the film, I didn't think we'd even be prepared. I hadn't talked to crew much, only given the brief heads up that I had a project coming up and might need some help. But that week I started messaging people if they were free and I started getting answers that "yes" they were. It almost shocked me, and I was like "Alright, I guess we're going for it!" So, I went forward with the plan, the plan being that I need to make a plan. Get call sheets together, shot lists written up, some kind of schedule in place and positions filled. I soon got in the groove of just going for it.

Spirits were high starting out, but I knew I needed to plan as best I could for this demanding project. Schedule-wise, I initially thought filming could last 8-12 days. Each of the five chapters would take 1-2 full days, I hoped. Again, the chapter story structure was meant to make filming easier since fewer locations and scenes. But, fast-forward to the end of the semester and I think we filmed over 20 days. To be fair, most days weren't full shoots, oftentimes only amounting to evenings and half-day shoots when people were available. Plus, as the script evolved, days and even reshoots were added. But nevertheless, production doesn't always go as planned. I wasn't surprised and in fact, I tried to make decisions that would help create a safety net when the proverbial crap hit the fan.

Working mainly with friends was one of those decisions. Not only would it be fun, but I could also rely much more on their patience than the patience of complete strangers. I definitely kept this in mind with my actors since most of them would have to commit a handful of days. This project itself would not be ideal. The schedule was constantly changing. The script was in the works till the end. Some shoots I got the script out to actors a day or two before. So I tried to make it clear from the get-go what they'd be getting themselves into. Someone who enthusiastically jumped on board was Cameron McMullen, who plays Preston. He was a good friend who I'd done a few video projects with before. He wasn't from the theater program and didn't have a lot of acting experience, but I knew with this project I'd much rather work with easy-going, enthusiastic friends than more "experienced" actors who would have less of a reason to stick with the project if things went south. All that said I lucked out when Kelsey Johnson agreed to join the cast. She is very professional. She is trained. She is experienced. But most importantly, Kelsey was just a great person. I hadn't known her prior to the project but reached out having been impressed by a prior project she had acted in. Getting to meet her for the first

time, things clicked. She was so easy to talk with and someone I could rely on. The face behind Wayne was Austin Mason another good friend who also happened to be incredibly talented and hard working. In fact, we both hoped to film something together our final semesters and this project ended up becoming the platform to do that. I had also roomed with Nick Rieth who played Nick. I knew I could trust him to show up on time, give his best, and also have fun doing so.

I applied this same rule when searching for the crew. Most everyone I had already known worked before, all being people I could have a fun time with while also getting work done. Overall the cast and crew, even in the late nights and sometime cold conditions, stayed in a good mood while sharing laughs together. Working alongside the crew and cast honestly became one of my favorite parts and made it still worthwhile. Seeing someone else invested in a project, even when you had days you doubted it, was more helpful than I think I even realize. Also, keeping in mind the often changing schedule and the fact we'd be filming during the school year, I tried to fill each position with two to three people. This definitely turned out to be a good decision. It was uncommon to have a day where I couldn't find at least someone to fill the role. Besides being a practical decision, it also gave me a chance to work with more great people and even learn observing the different ways different people would go about their job.

Another choice bred out of limitations was my choice to play the twins. I too am not a trained actor by any means (in fact, calling me an actor may be insulting to actors). But it was late in the game when I decided to add Garth to the plot, too late to find another actor. Many theater actors have notoriously busy schedules and with time running out I didn't think I'd find anyone who'd want to dive into another project where the script was still in the works. Plus, using identical twins wasn't inconsistent with the already very strange script. When filming the

actual scene between Garth and Simon I actually did the shoot alone. The script still wasn't completely finished and I hadn't memorized what lines were there, but I knew the direction I wanted to go. So, I'd setup the camera to record, get the boom microphone setup (which for close-ups I just held in my hands) and went for it. I'm glad I was alone because the process was so unprofessional. But it worked. Although I stumbled over lines and captured numerous angles just to be safe, I got everything that I needed. Filmmaking behind the scenes can be pretty absurd at times, but it's the finished product that matters.

If you were to ask me what I learned about directing I'm not really sure what I could say. I don't think it's something necessarily I have a knack for, although I enjoy the idea of it. But nevertheless, I learned a variety of lessons. For one, communication is key, and oftentimes communication is an area I lacked in. When working with actors I learned how often I would over explain. At times I'd try to paint the emotional backdrop and various thoughts that'd be going through a character's head, but I realized that sometimes all an actor needed was "more sad" or "tone it down a little" or "show a little more anger." It's their job to create the internal world. You just help direct the process (hence "director"). Only answer what they ask. If they want a one-word answer don't assume you need to give them an essay on their motivations. Word choice is also important, I found. When you say you want more of such-and-such in the performance and you both have differing definitions of such-and-such, time is wasted and confusion abounds. All this said, quality of communication is only as important as the message you communicate, I think. A director really needs to have a clear vision. When everyone looks to you for an answer you got to have one. People lose confidence and passion when their leader responds with "umm" and "let me think about that." The tough part is you're not always going to have an answer to every question. So do you just fake it? I think the hope is the director knows

what kind of story they want to tell so no matter what question is posed they can think up a fitting answer quickly. I failed at this so often, much of it due to my cautious nature. But I saw growth in my confidence. That fear of making the wrong decision had to be suppressed. I will make wrong decisions, but that's part of the process. Decide and stick with it. Then learn if it worked or not.

The role I felt most comfortable in was behind the camera as cinematographer. One thing experience has told me is being prepared is vital. Shot lists, storyboards, and shooting schedules all go a long way in forming a vision and plan. Even if they all get thrown out the window (which happens more often than not), going through the process is helpful in and of itself. I've been on past film sets where I'd show up without a clue of how it'd look and what coverage I'd need. While this positively provides experience in learning to think on your feet and edit in your head the project often suffered from a lack of vision. Of course, there are different directorial and visual approaches. Some play it safe and run the basic coverage like two over the shoulder shots on both characters and then a master. It's been used in some of the best films and can be very fitting, but I've also loved films that use each shot creatively to say something different. This takes intentionality, though. You got to know why you're covering one action or line of dialogue in a certain shot, like a close-up, where others you cover in a different shot, such as wide shot. Each has a different effect on the audience. To accomplish this, you need to either be great at coming up with it in the moment or you need to take care of it in preproduction. The latter is what I tried to do, at least from the outset.

In this process a skill I tried to develop was time management. As director and cinematographer, decisions had to be made about what shots were needed, which ones could be combined, and how much coverage was even necessary for a section of dialogue or action. One

problem I ran into was planning more shots than I realistically had time for. On professional film shoots it's not uncommon to take an hour or more to setup for just one shot. But the approach we used was very run-and-gun, most shots getting between 5-10 minutes to shoot. There was one planning strategy that helped a lot when I actually had time to use it. I would write on the script which shots were used for which sections. Then I could reference the script to know how long to shoot from one camera angle. If you know you're only going to use one line during that close-up, why in the world would you film the whole scene? It wastes time. On the other hand, it's always nice to have more coverage as a safety net. Things don't always turn out as planned. Having options can save you from unforeseen problems and so I find that it's really about striking a balance. Having options versus having time.

The visual style of this film changed from scene to scene. I went back and forth between handheld for some sections and controlled tripod and dolly shots for others. I loved the controlled style often used in Stanley Kubrick and David Fincher films. As opposed to the naturalistic movement of handheld, still shots or controlled camera movement reminds the audience their eyes are being guided. They are indeed watching a story that somebody is telling them. They're looking into another world, one in this case that's much like their own but also surreal. But past the creative reasons, sometime tripod shots made practical sense. Going handheld means pulling focus and pulling focus potentially means missing focus and needing more takes. I also had no choice when I filmed myself. But sometimes handheld not only captured the tone of a scene better but also gave me more freedom to capture the movement and blocking of the characters. The actors can have more freedom since the camera operator can adjust to them. The frenetic nature of it also befit some scenes more, like Chapter 2 where Sue is emotionally distressed and paces around in the control room. But I shouldn't pretend to act like

much of what I did was thoroughly thought out. Due to running on a tight schedule and not always having time to plan, many shots were thought up on the spot. I went with my gut or I tried out angles that I had seen in movies I liked. Again, this project was a chance to try anything and I wanted to experiment. Feeling okay with making potentially bad creative decisions can honestly be the most freeing. Again, the motto was “just do it.” Otherwise it wasn’t going to get done.

Lighting and locations go very much hand in hand. Most every scene takes place at night or in a dark space. The majority of the film occurs in the control room and the other parts are outdoors on campus. Because we were on such a tight schedule, lighting setups need to be simple and set in place for the most part. Studio D in the Ball Communications building worked very nicely. We used one of the giant hanging tungsten lights pointed down at the table to create the spotlight, sometimes using another light to fill in the stairs. Outdoors we mostly used what was already there. Because I’m used to filming without lights, I wasn’t too much out of my comfort zone. Composition goes a long way and finding the right side of an actor’s face to use goes a long way in compensating for uncontrollable light situations. Because shadows played such a huge role in the settings, we tried to utilize them. Again, this highlights the fact that filming, especially on a low-budget student film, requires creativity in making do with what you got. But pulling it off can be so exciting.

Finally, I want to discuss how what we filmed differed from the script. Again, this writing and filming process was in a constant dialogue with outside pressures and limitations. Chapter 3 is one example of this. The fight scene told through shadows had me so excited but the night of filming did not go as expected. We couldn’t get the shadows to work in a way that looked right on the wall and we were falling behind schedule. So, instead we shot for telling the

story through shadows on the ground and the silhouettes of the characters. Due to problems on set, falling behind, and the cold temperature outside, we had to call the shoot and cut out all of the dialogue between Sue's attacker and Preston. Instead I decided to do a montage in which pieces of the action fade in and out of black as some edgy rock music plays. Another example was in Chapter 5. I hadn't finished writing the song before filming and so I was only able to film parts I had written. This means in editing I'm literally piecing together the song as I piece together the cut. Certain sections are therefore being moved around and cut, such as when the stagehand interrupts the song halfway through. Chapter 2, Sue's introduction, also differed a bit. Parts of the monologue were dropped and sometimes I didn't have enough footage to fit with her monologue. I also got an over abundance of fire footage where she burns the notebook. So I extended the intro into a montage of her burning the notebook, where as in the script it was one zoom out shot. Again, we had to get creative with solving our problems.

As the movie continues to move forth in post-production, many of these key lessons will still flesh out. Editing, for example, is one long process of decision-making. Numerous camera angles and takes had to be sifted through. The best performances had to be found and cut together seamlessly. And when these scenes wouldn't cut together as planned, creative solutions had to be tried. Sound design, too would face these same questions. How is the original vision best supported by sound? How could it be improved upon? Music too would bring another dimension to the story. Perhaps, it could take things in a whole new direction. But in all these aspects, ideas will have to be experimented with and decisions made. I am excited to this process continue as I work towards the film's completion.

EXCERPT

The Interrogation Scene and the Origins of the Title

The finished scene attached to this thesis is a section from Chapter 1 when Wayne, Nick, and Preston meet face to face. This is the interrogation scene. I decided to title the film *The Club* because of Wayne's speech during this section. His whole monologue to Preston atop the table was one of the very first scenes that I wrote and I wasn't even sure if I would use it considering its absurd nature. I just had fun letting the words flow, but there seemed to be more depth than I first realized. I think it also established Wayne's frenetic character well. He's wild is he also self-aware of this? This speech draws attention to that, I think, in a vulnerable way. He recounts a time when some drunk at a bar hops on up and makes a fool of himself. The worst part for Wayne is the drunk is so oblivious to how others see him. As Wayne puts it, the drunk thought of himself like he were the "president of the club," the rest of the bar being filled with adoring fans. But in reality the opposite is really true. "He wasn't even in the club," Wayne declares. Ironically, Wayne too delivers this speech standing on a table, making quite a scene. Perhaps he's not so unlike the drunk from his story, and perhaps he's aware of this. Wayne then turns the conversation to Preston. Is Preston part of the club? In other words, is Preston aware of how others see him? Or is he a fool? Wayne asks the same of himself. "What about me, Preston? Am I in the club?" To paraphrase: am I a fool? Do I think more highly of myself than I ought to? Am I an outsider? Finally, Wayne asks an interesting question. Maybe they could both start their own club. If they're both outsiders, they can be outsiders together. While Wayne may seem like a goofball on the surface, I wanted there to be a depth to his character because of this self-awareness. He admits by the end that he made the whole story up, and maybe it was all an act to

put Preston more on edge. We're not supposed to know for sure, but Wayne brings up an interesting thought, one that I think has implications for the rest of the story.

If you think about the control room, it's a secret place in this story that only a handful of people stumble upon. The place is a bridge in two senses. In one, it's the literal bridge between our world and that which Simon and Garth come from. In another sense it provides a bridge (the monitor) between the user and the person whose channel number is being watched. To interpret it one way, I think the "club" could be this secret monitor room. But which club is it? Wayne's speech mentions two. There's the club that he and Preston may be excluded from. Then there's the club of the outsiders, the one he and Preston might make themselves. This is the club of fools who live in their own worlds. At the heart of this discussion, though, I think is this theme of understanding. How much can we understand of others and of ourselves, and how do we move forward when there's so much we can't know? In a way, we've all been the drunk man on the table, looking at ourselves differently than how others perceive us for better or for worse. By these standards, no one belongs to the same club because no one truly understands each other. And yet, this lack of understanding is something we all share and in that regard we belong to the same club. We're all human, in all its complexity and messiness. We find examples of this throughout the story. Sue's story highlights how the monitor, despite giving her access to the perspective of her brother, still wasn't enough to understand him. Preston's character himself is constantly a mystery to us and to others, isolated by his unwillingness to speak. Garth fails to understand Simon's decision to leave even after they both make their case. This film constantly deals with relationship and how misunderstanding affects them.

I would be lying if this were my plan all along. I simply followed my gut writing Wayne's lines, but I knew there was meaning to be found even if I had personally yet to uncover

it. Now, reflecting back upon this story, I can see how this interrogation scene brings these themes to the forefront. The problem is exposed. How do we as human relate to each other? Chapter 2 builds off this with Sue's questioning of whether she could have saved her brother. Then as we arrive at Chapter 5, Garth and Sue's exchange offers the answer, if you could call it that. This answer is an invitation. So to speak, we are all outside of the club in our own ways, but we are also one collective club of outsiders. Navigating this tension, Sue by the end offers to stick with a complete stranger, Garth, simply because he's another human struggling with similar problems as her. In a way, I'd like to think, this is her inviting him into a "club" so to speak.

FINAL THOUGHTS

I set out to write and shoot an ambitious project with friends. It really was a crash-course in filmmaking, but it wasn't only that. The lessons learned crossover into all areas of life, I think. Rarely do we have all the time in the world and therefore we simply have to make decisions at some point, sometime life changing ones. This has been an ongoing struggle of mine in creative projects but in the bigger scope of life as well. Behind it lies a fear of making some irreversible mistake but also a fear of not living up to my fullest potential. But this intense project forced me out of this comfort zone. That inner perfectionist had to be kept at bay and disciplined. This project and the hard work of my crew and cast depended on decisions I had to make. Sometimes it meant making choices that weren't the best but were still better than no choice at all. But even when mistakes were made, the process didn't end there. Revisions could be made. Failures could be turned into the foundations for successes. And when that initial passion was lost and throwing in the towel seemed so tempting, I learned to fight for a project for the project's sake. Although knowing when to let go is important, knowing when to persevere will be necessary, especially in this industry. Overall, this has been hectic process, but one I'm grateful for. This thesis gave me an opportunity to try something bold with friends and I believe lessons will only continue to be gained even after the project's completion.

The Club

By

Bobby Bennett

FADE IN:

OVER BLACK:

SUPER:

"Preface: Brothers"

CUT TO

EXT. SNOW LAND - DAY

A flurry of snow.

Through a blizzard of snow we barely make out two figures, one following the other far behind.

The figure following belongs to Garth (22) swathed in winter gear and pressing on against the snow, determined.

The figure far ahead being followed belongs to Simon (22), Garth's identical twin brother. Simon carries a guitar in one hand.

Simon comes to a stop and turns around, suspicious. From what he can see through the snow, the faint figure of Garth can be made out in the blizzard.

From Garth's point of view, Simon is likewise near impossible to make out. But Garth recognizes even the faint figure of his brother. Simon then turns around and continues along his path disappearing into the snow.

Garth pushes on. The snowfall has picked up and he can barely see a few feet before him.

But something begins to vaguely come into view. A tall door frame. But instead of a door, a heavy curtain wall hangs and billows.

Garth arrives at the foot of this mysterious doorway, Simon nowhere to be seen. Garth is perplexed. Perhaps Simon is behind it?

He reaches out a hand, grabbing at the thick curtain and pulling it aside. As far as he can tell, it's completely dark beyond the curtained door.

He peers in even closer and he spots something. In the distance, a spotlight area reveals a small table upon which lie a few items and an old computer. Beyond it lies a metal staircase, and at the foot of the stairs is none other than Simon.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

2.

Garth watches on, surprised to say the least. What should he say?

Garth looks back to where he came from, the snow not letting up. He turns to the mysterious doorway and takes a step forward, swallowed up into the darkness, pulling the curtain behind him.

Against the white backdrop of snow the door frame stands alone. The curtain billows gently.

FADE TO BLACK

OVER BLACK:

SUPER:

"Chapter 1: The Club"

CUT TO

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

PRESTON (22), an unassuming and quiet character, walks along a sidewalk beside a three-tiered parking structure lined with a few trees. He wears a stoic face as he stares at his feet. Shadows and orange light take turns washing over his face.

He looks up, something grabbing his attention. His pace begins to slow.

Walking towards him is ERIN (22) seemingly your average pretty girl. She takes care of some business on her phone, oblivious to her surroundings.

Amidst the backdrop of the parking garage Preston walks in from the left, his pace slowing. Erin continues towards him from the right, still taking no notice.

Then she looks up, aware eyes are on her.

Preston's gaze falters slightly.

As they near each other, Preston's eyes lock onto her, past the normal accepted length of a few seconds. She eyes him cautiously as she passes.

He slows his pace to a stop, she glances back and slows as well.

The both come to a stop.

(CONTINUED)

Preston doesn't seem to know what to do, almost frozen place and unable to act.

Erin takes an extra second, thrown off by the interaction. She turns and starts to leave, now on edge.

Against the wide backdrop of the parking garage, Erin's silhouette continues on her way, making distance between her and the still frozen Preston.

He gives one last glance to her walking off in the distance. His face, longing, maybe even worried, turns away and continues down the sidewalk.

ON ERIN

as she walks past a small robot like object akin to Wall-E guarding the exit to the parking garage. We hold on it as her footsteps grow faint.

Close on it's back door, we see it slowly creak open.

A POV from inside has us seeing Erin further out of view as she walks around the corner of the parking garage.

A slit of light falls onto the eye of Simon, peering out.

INT. PARKING GARAGE STAIRS - NIGHT

Preston climbs a flight of stairs, passing by a floor to ceiling window overlooking the sidewalk outside that he had just tread. He halts, his eyes narrow. Something has caught his eye and he takes another step closer to the glass.

Looking out it, he sees the Simon climbing out of the robot's back.

ON SIMON

who pulls himself fully out, taking in his surroundings.

ON PRESTON

whose intrigued. He scans the area around. Still no one.

He sees Simon begin to pull a guitar case out of the robot's back.

ON SIMON

as he lifts the case out, setting it on the robot.

Suddenly he halts.

The sound of footsteps.

ON PRESTON

Preston, wide-eyed. He notices that Simon is looking around frantically.

ON SIMON

as he peers around the corner of the parking garage to source of the footsteps. Then he turns back to the robot.

ON PRESTON

Preston leaves the window and heads towards the door.

ON SIMON

as he hurriedly, and awkwardly tries to squeeze back into the robot, the guitar still left out and leaning against it. Simon has almost made it inside when...

ERIN (O.S.)

HEY!

Simon freezes.

Around the corner Erin appears, her attention focused up on ...Preston, who stands at the second level of the parking garage looking over the edge.

Preston, like a deer in the headlights, turns his attention to her.

ERIN

(to Preston)

What, you following me?

Preston, in shock, doesn't know how to respond. He looks at her then to the slightly ajar door of the robot. Simon must have pulled himself completely in because he's nowhere to be seen. The guitar, on the other hand still rests against the robot.

(CONTINUED)

ERIN

Well, if you got to know, I'm heading back to my dorm, to grab something that I forgot. It ain't none of your damn business but since you seem so interested in me, I thought you might enjoy that little fun fact. You want to know an even more fun fact? I went shopping the other day and bought myself a gift.

She pulls out a small spray can.

ERIN

Know what this is?

Preston, unsure of whether to respond.

ERIN

That's right, pepper spray. Not exciting enough? Well, it's the kind they use on bears so that's fun!

The slit of light falls on the Stranger's fearful eye in the robot. He can see her just a foot away from him.

ERIN

Oh no, but that's not for self-defense. No, I'm a trained black belt, and if I find you within spitting distance again, I'll single-handedly tear you a new ass.

She shakes up the spray can again.

ERIN

This'll just be the cherry on top.

Preston is frozen.

ERIN

I'll be leaving now. You can decide what kind of night you're about to have.

She turns and notices the guitar for the first time.

ERIN

(under her breath)
What a night.

She continues down the sidewalk. After she reaches a far enough distance, she looks down at the spray can which reads "listerine breath spray", glances over her shoulder, then shakes it, sprays a little in her mouth and puts it in her bag.

ON PRESTON

who watches her grow smaller in the distance. He's snapped out at the sound of SCRAPING. He looks down in time to spot below him Simon quickly scrambling out of the robot's back.

Simon looks up at Preston and their eyes meet. Simon gives him a small nod, then grabs his guitar and turns to leave.

Preston doesn't know quite what to make of the whole ordeal.

He returns his attention to the robot.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT - LATER

From dark the sound of scraping gives way to what is the POV from inside the robot as Preston opens the door's back looking in.

Preston looks around.

Nobody in the area.

He situates his body so he's going back in first. He crawls backwards and closes the door behind him.

All around is silent.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

The sound of CRAWLING in the black.

Preston's face comes into a pale light. His eyes go wide.

He's looking down a metal staircase and at the end of it sits an old TV monitor that was left on, sitting upon a desk with two chairs pulled up to it. A set of headphones are plugged into the television and a remote lies beside it.

Preston pulls himself forward and takes the first steps down the stairs. Clunk, clunk, clunk.

He reaches the floor and makes his way to the foot of the desk, scanning its contents.

(CONTINUED)

Preston then looks around, checking the area as well. Everything seems to fall into darkness. He turns his attention to the monitor.

On the monitor in the upper left hand corner is channel number in the upper left-hand corner reading: "24998". The screen itself is black.

Sticky notes, adorn the monitor. One reads "do not remove the notebook" and over top it sits another in response that reads "BRING BACK THE NOTEBOOK!".

He looks to a remote sitting beside, also taped with written in directions such as "time", "date", "person."

Preston, unsure what to make of it, picks up the remote. He presses the channel button with "person" taped above it.

The channel changes to a different POV, the number turning from "24998" to "24999". This one has something, someone's POV driving at night.

He presses it again and another POV shows up, this one of a GIRL (20) leaning forward as if to kiss us.

Preston quickly flips the channel.

Playing on the screen appears to be a POV from someone walking down a street at night. The POV whips around to look behind at a MAN in the distance.

From the headphones laying on the table emits a sound.

FEMALE VOICE
(muffled and small, through
headphones)
Is he following?

Preston, eyes now on the headphones, makes the connection.

He looks around the room again, paranoid. He then picks the headphones up and places one to his ear.

FEMALE VOICE
(more clearly, through
headphones)
Don't say anything. I just need to
keep my mouth shut and keep
walking. He'll leave me alone.

Preston's eyes widen.

On screen, the POV looks back again. The figure of the Man gets closer.

(CONTINUED)

There's a sound of scraping. Preston looks back up to see a pair of shoes at the top of the stairs. He turns back to the screen, the tension rising. What to do?!

Preston turns the monitor off and quickly pulls the headphones off, setting them aside.

He looks around for somewhere to hid. Again, everything is darkness. His attention falls on...

The stairs!

He hurries around behind the staircase, crouching down. Above him fall the feet of NICK (21), a mute, and following behind are the feet of WAYNE (21) whom we will find out is quite the opposite. Wayne carries a notebook in hand.

Reaching the bottom Nick dutifully takes his seat at the monitor, puts the headphones on, and grabs the remote, his thumb about to press the power button when --

WAYNE

Hold on. Hold on Nick.

Wayne is still at the stairs, now taking a seat, a notebook open in his lap. Nick turns to him.

WAYNE

Dude, what do you think?

Nick looks down, ponders, then returns his gaze to Wayne with his answer, his eyes speaking for him. Wayne, understanding the unspoken language, nods.

WAYNE

I appreciate the positivity my man, but I'm starting to think we're just running on fumes here. It's like trying to find a needle in the haystack. I mean, tell me you don't get tired of sitting there flipping channel by channel, night after night, hoping to catch a glimpse of...I don't even know what.

Nick, passive, unsure how to offer consolation.

Wayne looks at the open notebook: numbers but little to no names next to them.

WAYNE

(holding notebook up)

I mean, look Nick. We've filled out like one name. So, we either find

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WAYNE (cont'd)
the person who took the other one,
redo all the work ourselves, or...

Silence.

WAYNE
I mean, I've been all for it, but I
think there's a time we just got to
be realistic.

Wayne sighs and gets up. He walks over to Nick and throws
the notebook down on the desk and takes the opposite seat.

WAYNE
Copiers! How long have copiers been
around?! Jeez, it would have taken
a few minutes to scan the whole
thing and voila, we wouldn't be in
this mess.

Wayne sighs yet again, even heavier, turning to Nick.

WAYNE
Look, man, I got into this for the
same reason as you did, but a
service is hard to keep alive when
we've got nothing to actually
offer. I mean, here I'll make a
deal with you. Tonight. I will give
you all of tonight till the rising
of the sun and then I got to jump
ship man.

Nick: it's a hard deal but he understands. He nods.

WAYNE
Alright, well let's get at it.

They both turn to the monitor.

Nick turns on the monitor. The screen lights up, the same
POV from before of the woman being followed.

Preston squints, trying to get a better view of the screen
over Nick's shoulder.

On screen an attack now unfolds from the POV of the woman.

Nick's eyes glued to the screen.

Both he and Nick watch the events unfold. From the stairwell
behind them Preston hides and watches.

(CONTINUED)

WAYNE

Oh, not another one.

Preston's eyes wide as he watches on in the shadows. From his POV we watch the terrifying scene of the attack beginning to escalate.

Wayne grabs for the remote.

WAYNE

Nothing we can do.

He presses the next channel button.

Channel number "24601" appears and this POV shows Nick and Wayne from the back of their own heads. It's Preston's channel!

Nick and Wayne turn to each other. What the heck?

Preston, eyes wide, in panic. What should he do?

He's got it! Preston shuts his eyes.

The screen goes black. Nick and Wayne, look back to the screen, then back to each other. Then they look towards Preston's direction, at the stairs.

From what they can see, it's just the metal staircase, all else dark behind it.

Nick rises from his seat. He and Wayne slowly creep towards the stairs. Wayne motions him to take the opposite side.

We push in to the monitor. It flickers alive as Preston has opened his eyes, his POV now showing he's in a different location watching Wayne and Nick lunge at the space behind the stairs, clang around, and come up empty-handed. The screen goes black again (Preston's closed his eyes) and Wayne and Nick return to their positions, Nick in his seat putting the headphones on and Wayne standing over him.

Wayne then looks around the control room, eyes peeled for some kind of movement. He begins to walk around the table.

WAYNE

Well, new found friend, it's funny how the mind works. The things we try so hard to think less about often speak the loudest. And so, when I ask "where are you?" you will inevitably give away something you probably wish you hadn't.

(CONTINUED)

Wayne turns to Nick.

WAYNE
(to Preston)
Are you behind us?

Nick, listening to the headphones for any response. Wayne watches Nick for any clue.

Nick furrows his brow, and motions for Wayne to come take a listen. Wayne steps in and presses his ear to one of the headphones.

PRESTON
(through headphones)
The wheels on the bus go round and round.

Wayne pulls back, aghast.

WAYNE
Damn. He's a smart man.

Wayne stands up and looks into the darkness.

WAYNE
Damn, I say! You are a smart man!

Wayne turns back to Nick.

WAYNE
Well, Nickolai my friend. What say you? Ought me grab our rods and go fishing?

Nick rises from his seat and they both spread out, entering into darkness.

From above we see the spotlit area, the desk, the monitor, the stairs. But all else around is black and indiscernible.

WAYNE (O.S.)
Marco!

Still nothing.

WAYNE (O.S.)
Marco!!

Suddenly the screen lights up, Preston's eyes now open and his POV has us looking at the back of Wayne. Preston jumps on him and the screen goes black again.

(CONTINUED)

WAYNE (O.S.)
(choked)
Nick!

Nick bursts across the spotlit area to the source of Wayne's voice.

Back on the screen Preston's eyes open and we can see Nick rushing towards us/Preston. Nick makes a jump and forward and the screen goes black again.

All sounds stop.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Preston sits duct taped to the chair.

Nick sits by the monitor, headphones on. On screen is Preston's POV. Wayne, pacing back and forth.

WAYNE
I've got three, no four questions
for you. And, as I'm sure you
understand how this works--

Wayne slaps the monitor.

WAYNE
--we will get an answer to each.
You seem like the quiet kind and I
can tell because I'm in fact best
friends with a mute myself.

Wayne slaps Nick. Nick looks at Preston challengingly.

WAYNE
So, don't feel pressured to
exercise your jaw. Sit back, relax
and enjoy. Question one: what's
your name?

Preston doesn't respond.

Wayne, unperturbed, looks to Nick for an answer. Nick, with the notebook open, writes "Preston."

WAYNE
Surprisingly cooperative. Thank you
Preston. Alright, second question:
is this your first time here?

Wayne looks back to Nick for the answer. Nick holds up one finger.

(CONTINUED)

WAYNE

First time. Alright. Now for question three: how'd you find this place?

Preston looking around, not sure how to respond.

Wayne looks to Nick. Nick responds non-verbally, unsure.

WAYNE

That's alright. We can find that out pretty easily.

Wayne looks to Nick as if giving him the signal.

Nick grabs the remote and presses the rewind button. On screen, the footage begins to play backwards.

WAYNE

Alright, now for the final question. Would you like to hear a story?

Preston watches. Eyes wide.

Wayne slaps Nick on the shoulder again. Nick looks up.

WAYNE

What think you Nick? He look like the kind that'll enjoy a quality anecdote?

Nick locking a stare with Preston, nods. Then returns to his work.

Wayne excited, hops around with glee.

WAYNE

Alright. Well, so a few nights ago this guy right here and I were enjoying a night out at our favorite bar down in The Village and in comes a man...

Wayne begins to act it out. Taking a step back and then strutting drunkenly towards the table.

WAYNE

And you know how some people you can just tell. You can just tell by looking at them that they're...well, sense of social awareness is lower than should be expected. And so...

(CONTINUED)

Wayne comes up to the table.

WAYNE

He steps right on up, one foot...

Wayne places one foot up on the table.

WAYNE

...after the other.

The other foot goes up. Preston watches, wary.

WAYNE

Now, mind you, he was doing it on those swiveling bar stools...

He twists his feet in place to simulate the bar stools swiveling.

WAYNE

--so let credit go where credit's deserved. But he then scours the bar, miscounting attention for friendly admiration, and then proceeds to deliver a God-awful joke. It went like this: What do giraffes have that no other animals have?

Wayne looks down at Preston, waiting expectantly.

Preston, still silent, watches on in concern.

WAYNE

Baby giraffes.

Preston, silent.

WAYNE

Exactly. But of course, he didn't get the hint. He just grins.

Preston looks to Nick who is busy studying the screen.

WAYNE

You know, that's...that's what bothered me. He comes strutting in as though he's like president of the club, and they've all gathered, eagerly awaiting their leader's triumphant arrival to save them from their boring evenings. And you know, if he came in more subtle

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WAYNE (cont'd)
about it, maybe even a bit
self-deprecating about it, then it
wouldn't be such an assault. But
instead, he marches on up there,
quite proud of himself and so very
blind to the fact that he was
anything but president of the club.
He wasn't even in the club. That's
the irony. And you can bet after
his little performance, that no one
was jumping at the bit to extend an
invite.

Wayne sighs.

Preston, still silent. Eyes wide, he again glances at Nick.

Nick, still checking out the monitor, headphones on,
attending to business.

WAYNE
What about you Preston, you in the
club?

Preston looks back to Wayne.

WAYNE
That why you so quiet, Preston? You
make a fool of yourself once? Now,
it's people like me that haunt you?
The critics? All those people who
could be whispering how you're the
butt of your own joke?

Preston's face tense, but not exactly angry.

WAYNE
And what do you think of me,
Preston? Am I in the club?

Things get tense. Preston stares at Wayne.

Wayne returns the stare.

Nick still watching the screen.

WAYNE
Hey, maybe if we're both out of the
club. We could start our own,
right?

Nick pulls at Wayne's leg.

(CONTINUED)

Wayne looks down. Nick motions to the screen.

Wayne keeps his eyes pinned on Preston. Preston sits uncomfortably.

Nick waiting upon Wayne.

Wayne smiles and hops down.

WAYNE

Jeez, you look like a deer caught
in the headlights. No worries my
man. I'm just making it up as I
go.

Wayne takes a look at the screen. Nick presses play and we see from Preston's POV from earlier watching Simon emerge from the robot and then take off.

Wayne, not happy, looks on up at Preston.

WAYNE

Wait, there's another guy? Well,
shoot who decided to have a party
and forget to invite the hosts?

Preston, doesn't say anything.

Wayne looks to Nick whose listening through the headphones. Preston watches Nick, then returns his gaze to see Wayne's reaction.

Nick nods.

WAYNE

(to Nick)

Check a little further back.

Nick presses rewind and the screen starts playing in reverse like a VHS player.

WAYNE

So, you're just an average Joe who
happened to see something he
shouldn't have and let his
curiosity get the best of him?
Sound like a fair enough synopsis?

Preston just sits there, still offering little.

Wayne plays the game, and continues to stare at him.

They talk with their eyes, Wayne trying to prod him with looks, Preston appearing to almost play dumb.

(CONTINUED)

Nick pats Wayne to get his attention again. Wayne takes a look at the monitor and boy do his eyes go wide.

WAYNE

Holy crap!

Wayne looks up at Preston, disbelieving. For once he doesn't have anything to say.

Nick just looks at Preston wide-eyed. Wayne turns the television around for Preston to see. He then presses play.

WAYNE

Right now I'm having a hard time believing my own eyes. I mean, the screen doesn't lie, man, but I just got to ask...

On the monitor the memory plays out from Preston's POV as he puts a black mask on and turns to an ATTACKER going after a WOMAN in an alley. Preston approaches the Attacker and easily knocks him out.

WAYNE

You're that guy? The one who goes around kicking ass as a hobby behind a slick black mask?

Preston watches the television screen. His brow begins to furrow.

On screen it shows Preston's POV turn to the woman he just saved.

Preston watches on, eyes glued to the screen.

Wayne hops up and walks around to Preston and reaches into his backpack. Preston, doesn't know what to do and like usual just watches and stares.

Inside the backpack are a pile of black masks.

Nick watches, on the edge of his seat.

Wayne pulls out a mask. He then puts it on, looking up at Nick.

WAYNE

This is sick! Here, Nick, catch!

Wayne grabs for another and tosses it across to Nick.

Preston watches on helplessly.

(CONTINUED)

Wayne walks around, kneeling down next to Nick who also now wears the mask.

WAYNE

So, that's it? All that it takes is the mask? No special suit? No utility belt? Just your bare knuckles, a black mask, and a fastidious hunger for justice? Dude!

Wayne starts to beam as if he's hit a jackpot.

WAYNE

Let me put it this way, if you had your own posters...you don't do you?

Preston still glued to the screen.

WAYNE

Well, if you did, Nick and I would be first in line. I mean, you are an inspiration, my man! Big fans. Big fans! Look, I can safely speak for Nick and I both when I'm making this proposition. We would be happy to share this place with you.

Preston looks up, interested.

WAYNE

It could even be your own "lair". Nothing fancy, but--

Wayne slaps the TV.

WAYNE

--home to an invaluable tool. And I'm sure it goes without saying but I'll say it in any case, we now know a very special secret of yours, just as you have so happened to stumble upon ours. And so, we are inclined to ask for a favor.

Preston, waiting. Wayne pulls the mask up, now face to face. He motions to Nick for the notebook.

Nick takes the notebook from the table and opens up so Preston can easily see.

(CONTINUED)

WAYNE

See this? This is what you would call a poor excuse. But a poor excuse for what you ask? Well, there's a reason why this is Notebook number two.

Wayne puts up two fingers, Nick echoes.

WAYNE

We no longer have the first one in our possession. When we first stumbled onto this place we had the whole package deal. For every number there was a name. Someone at sometime had gathered a butt-load of info and left it just sitting here.

Preston flips through all the pages. Each page is barely filled out.

WAYNE

As you can see we've had to start from scratch. When we found it, Nick and I thought, hmm, access to the mind of anyone on campus. We can't pass a chance up like that. See, we're running a show not too different from yours. We want to cause change for the better. But now being in the our current state, progress has become basically nonexistent and our operations have been, well, inoperative.

Nick lays the notebook out, grabs the remote, presses a few buttons and then turns the monitor around, showing Preston's POV of the Stranger from earlier.

WAYNE

That kid you saw tonight. He may have the first notebook. And so, what you're going to help us do is find this guy by any means necessary and get the notebook back to us. Sound good?

Preston, still frozen in place.

Wayne nods.

(CONTINUED)

WAYNE

Alright!

Wayne hops on up and starts to undo Preston's bindings. He looks down at him, very close.

WAYNE

Remember, we know where you live.

Nick writes in the notebook then raises up a page which reads Preston's number with "Masked Ass-Kicker" written next to it.

WAYNE

Number 24601. Looks like that's a third identity you'll have to keep track of.

He finishes ripping off the tape and then pats Wayne on the shoulder.

WAYNE

Good doing business with you Mr.
Ass Kicker!

EXT. ROBOT - NIGHT

Preston exits the robot, looking around him.

The coast is clear. Preston walks off, leaving the area.

All is quite in the night.

FADE TO BLACK

OVER BLACK:

SUPER:

"Chapter 2: The Miracle"

CUT TO

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

We slowly zoom back from the a page of channel numbers with names next to them. Another page falls on top, likewise with names next to channel numbers. And another page. And another. Pulling back we see fire eating in from the edges.

SUE (22) stands with a stack of pages in her hand, plus a notebook cover. She continues tossing them in.

(CONTINUED)

Her face, solemn, all cried out.

SUE (V.O.)
I did what you said.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Number 57701 sits on the bottom of the screen. We pull back to reveal the monitor displaying someone's POV.

SUE (V.O.)
I gave you space. It was your life.
You're decisions.

ON MONITOR

The POV shows us shutting and locking a door.

ON SUE

who sits watching, distressed, interested.

SUE (V.O.)
I didn't want to force what I
thought was best for your life.

Her fingers press a few buttons on the remote to fast forward.

ON MONITOR

The POV shows us looking down now at a line of cocaine on a table.

ON SUE

It's getting harder for her to watch.

SUE (V.O.)
Who am I to do that? To tell you
what to do? To tell you who to
hangout with.

ON MONITOR

The screen goes black.

SUE (V.O.)
And you probably knew it'd be easy
with me.

ON SUE

Sue holds the remote, just having pressed the power button.

SUE (V.O.)
Soft-spoken Sue, too-afraid to step
on anyone's toes.

She pulls off the headphones and leans in to turn off the monitor.

She turns for the stairs...but stops.

SUE (V.O.)
John you are my brother and I want
you to sincerely know that as your
sister...

Determination takes over. She turns back to the monitor.

SUE (V.O.)
...I believe that was bullshit.

Closer to the monitor. She turns the monitor back on.

SUE (V.O.)
It was bullshit John.

His channel comes back up.

SUE (V.O.)
Bullshit.

Sue's watching, headphones on now. Angry.

MONTAGE - SUE WATCHES HER BROTHER

-- Sue paces around the control room.

SUE (V.O.)
I wanted to know, why? What was it
in your head that kept you like
this?

(CONTINUED)

-- Sue stands over the monitor, hand running through hair.

SUE (V.O.)
I'm your sister, if anyone would
know the answer it should've been
me.

-- Sue listening in to headphones, trying to restrain her
anger.

SUE (V.O.)
I prayed. Honestly I prayed for a
miracle.

-- Sue's hands together, eyes closed, deep in prayer.

SUE (V.O.)
And what if. What if I got an
answer?

-- Sue walks down the stairs, entering into the control
room.

-- Sue stands over computer, studying it.

SUE (V.O.)
What if I really, somehow could've
gotten in your head, stepped into
your shoes?

-- Sitting down, she presses a few buttons on the remote.

SUE (V.O.)
I'd say that could've changed it
all. I could figure out how to fix
it.

-- Sue's face hardens as she watches the screen.

SUE (V.O.)
I'd know what to say and I'd
actually have the guts to say it.

END MONTAGE

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Sue, seated, headphones on, watches the screen. Displayed on
it is again her brother's channel.

From his POV we see Sue confronting him, getting in his
face.

(CONTINUED)

From the headphones we hear the sounds of Sue's yelling.
The argument intensifies on screen, Sue desperate but also getting nastier.
More yelling emits from the headphones.
Sue watches the screen, horrified by her own actions.
She grabs for the remote and presses pause.
On screen the memory pauses, past Sue frozen in mid-yell.

SUE (V.O.)
Maybe I should've just kept my
mouth shut.

Sue, torn up, turns the monitor off and removes the headphones, letting the moment sink in.

BACK TO FIRE

Sue's holding page - with his number.
She's about to throw it in.

SUE (V.O.)
What happened to those moments?

Then she decides to rip out his number and hold onto it, but...

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

The sound of Sue singing "Come Thou Fount" with accompanying guitar is barely audible.

Sue, again, sitting at the monitor. We push in towards the screen showing her brother's channel and the music grows louder as we do. His POV is of a past memory of Sue singing the song and smiling at him.

SUE (V.O.)
It'd make me wonder, what did you
even think when we had those
moments? Was it just me who enjoyed
them?

We continue to push in through the screen to...

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Where Sue sits upon a porch, singing "Come Thou Fount." The music is all we hear and continues into the montage.

MONTAGE - SUE AND JOHN'S GOOD TIMES

-- John plays guitar, smiling back at Sue

-- They both laugh MOS over something.

-- Sue's talking MOS animatedly.

-- John listen attentively.

-- They both sit together, Sue laying her head against John's shoulder as they take in the view of the backyard.

END MONTAGE

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

We're back in the control room, Sue's singing and John's guitar playing continue but begin to fade out. Sue watches the screen with a bittersweet smile.

SUE (V.O.)

(trembling)

And if you enjoyed them so much. If
we enjoyed them...how could they
not make you...I don't know.
Change? What wasn't good enough?

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Sue stands, thinking.

SUE (V.O.)

I stayed back out of your way. I
fought you head to head. John, what
did you want from me?

She looks to the monitor that's turned off. Sighing, she turns away and begins pacing.

SUE (V.O.)

I guess I'm afraid to think that
you didn't want anything.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

She grabs for the remote and presses in a specific time and date.

SUE (V.O.)

It got to the point that every morning I'd wake up and think "what if this were the last day I ever saw you?" Talk about motivation.

ON MONITOR

From inside the car - driving

SUE (V.O.)

How hard is it to make someone listen?

ON SUE

Sue's eyes glued to the screen.

SUE (V.O.)

Why didn't you just listen, John?

ON MONITOR

Car, starts to swerve.

ON SUE

Tears forming in her eyes.

SUE

(desperate)

Why didn't you just listen?

ON MONITOR

The car begins to swerve more.

ON SUE

as she grabs for the remote, but as she does she knocks it over.

It falls to the floor.

She looks to the screen, closes her eyes.

From the headphones we hear a crash.

Sue, her eyes still closed, start to tear up. She presses them shut even further.

SUE (V.O.)

Why?

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Sue's eyes still closed, tears dried on her face.

SUE

Why?

She wipes her face and opens them. She takes a breath, the natural sound enveloping her all around. She's sitting upon the porch, the guitar her brother's guitar laying beside her. Everything feels stark, and especially empty today.

She turns to his empty space, as if looking at him. She then returns her gaze downwards, unable to meet his imaginary eyes.

SUE

I've thought, if I had one last thing to say to you now after all this, it'd be: would you have listened now?

Sue looks up meeting the eyes of her brother not there.

SUE

But I won't. It doesn't matter now and even if it did I don't think I'd like the answer.

SUE

If it never could have been fixed, then it makes any moment, no matter how hopeful...

She looks over at the case.

(CONTINUED)

SUE
It's just a lie. It spoils
everything.

She sighs. And begins to hum.

Sitting there alone at the porch, the melody wafts through the air, small amongst the environment of noise, no guitar to accompany her.

BACK TO FIRE

The humming continues on, the score now underneath.

Sue holds his ripped out number from the notebook over the flames.

Her hand lets go and the paper floats into the flames.

Sue watches, stoic.

The number twists and curls in the fire.

The crackling of the fire mixes with Sue's humming.

Sue leaves, the fire burning alone in the cold of the night.

FADE TO BLACK

OVER BLACK:

SUPER:
"Chapter 3: The Conversation"

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

A brick wall. Light from the right casts shadows across its gritty texture.

The sound of footsteps.

Sue's walking shadow casts onto the bricks.

CREEP (O.S)
Hey, hey hold on there.

Another taller shadow follows behind, casting onto the bricks. Kelsey's shadow startled, turns to the voice.

Silence. Tension. The Man's shadow makes a step forward. Kelsey's takes a step back.

(CONTINUED)

Beat.

CREEP (O.S)

Come on, don't make this harder
than it's got to be.

His shadow takes another step forward and Sue's backs away. His then lunges for hers and the chase is on. We follow as their shadows scurry and stretch across the brick. Hers is overtaken, with a scream, and the shadows writhe and battle, stretching evermore until landing on the feet of...

...Preston decked out in his vigilante garb, dressed in black with the black mask, its matte paint shining dully in the orange light of the street lamp. His eyes fierce and hiding in the shadows.

Wide against the backdrop of the brick alley wall and the fighting shadows, Preston's dark figure emerges from the shadows and walks ominously towards the commotion off screen. His shadow joins there's and rips the guy's shadow off Sue's. With a jab he knocks the man down.

His shadow grabs the Creep's and starts to drag him along.

Preston has the Creep by the cuff of his jacket and drags him through the gravelly ground into the shadows.

Sue watches, shaken, but curious.

The sound of duct tape peeling from a roll.

Preston's silhouette lays the Creep's up against the wall. Still conscious, but incapacitated. His arms and feet are taped up.

The Creep, his terrified eyes trained on Preston.

Preston's black mask, like an omen of death.

Grabbing for the Creep's pocket, Preston removes a cellphone.

He holds it up to the Creep's terrified face who shakes his head in a desperate attempt at resisting.

CREEP

(fast and nervous)

No, no, no. Please. I know what
you're doing. I'm not like them.
Just, just let me off the hook, I
didn't mean it--

Preston pushes the numbers "9.1.1" The phone begins ringing.

(CONTINUED)

CREEP

No, come on. I'm not like them. I'm not that guy.

Preston, gently holds the phone up to the man's ear.

CREEP

Please, you can't. I'm on the basketball team. Honors college. My parents...come on, this will ruin me, man.

Preston pockets the Creep's neck in his palm with a tight grip.

The phone picks up.

OFFICER

(through phone)

Police department. What seems to be the problem?

The black mask waits expectantly.

The Creep, silent, trying to postpone his fate.

Preston's hand squeezes tighter.

CREEP

(gasping)

Okay, okay.

Preston release pressure on his neck.

OFFICER

(through phone)

Hello?

CREEP

Hi, yeah...I.

(deep breath)

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. It's him. I made a stupid mistake and he's got me.

Preston squeezes tightly again.

OFFICER

(through phone)

Please. Sir, try and relax and speak calmly. What happened?

Preston shakes his head. Keep your mouth shut. The Creep gets the hint.

(CONTINUED)

The Creep turns to Kelsey, whose watching at a distance.

CREEP

I...I came on to--

Preston squeezes harder.

CREEP

I attacked! I attacked her. In the alley off of main street next to the bakery. Just come pick me up. I'm tied here.

POLICE

(through phone)

Wait, the masked vigilante. Is he there?

Preston ends the call and throws the phone to the side.

He then turns to his backpack and pulls out a black mask just like his. He also grabs the silver marker.

The Creep looks up pathetically.

Preston holds out the mask to put on, waiting.

CREEP

Oh come on. You've already got me.

Preston waits.

Sighs. The Creep lifts his head up and Preston places the mask on him. He then takes the silver marker and writes on the forehead.

The word reads "Attempted Rape" across the black mask. The Creep's wide eyes hide in the hollow of the mask's eyes.

Sue watches, almost horrified by her savior.

Preston rises and turns to her. He limps towards her.

She stands her ground watching with hesitation. Can he be trusted?

Preston stops. Kelsey, with a deep breath, gathers herself.

Preston nods.

PRESTON

(whisper)

Number 46072.

(CONTINUED)

He turns and walks away.

Sue's left, watching in shock. Did she hear him right? And how does he know?

SUE

Hey! Wait you! What'd you say?

Police sirens are heard in the distance.

Preston continues down the alley and turns around the corner.

The sirens grow louder and Sue watches on, torn.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Black. The scraping of a metal door. Feet appear. Then Sue appears.

Sue walks down and stops at the foot of the stairs. Preston sits, still masked and in his vigilante clothes, waiting by the monitor.

SUE

What do you know about me?

Preston waits a beat. He then turns to the screen and turns it on. He presses his number into the remote: 24601.

Preston's POV appears on screen, watching Kelsey. Preston motions to the open seat beside him.

Sue looks suspicious, but she's already this far down the rabbit hole. She takes the seat.

Preston takes the headphones from the desk and holds them out for her to put her head in between. She's hesitant to make a move.

His eyes from behind the mask hold tightly on her. Hers respond in like.

She goes for it and sticks out her neck.

In an intimate moment, he places the headphones gently on her ears. She holds them snugly to her head. Can she hear his thoughts?

He sits back in his seat, the monitor showing his POV trained on her. On screen we see her watching back.

(CONTINUED)

SUE

What do you know about me?

Up close to her headphones, unintelligible speaking emits. Preston's response.

Preston remains still, his eyes trained on her under the mask.

Sue's face begins to drop, even hardening. But she then seems to give up. He must know a lot and it's too late to hide it now.

SUE

You understand why I burned the notebook?

Preston is still. She listens to the headphones.

SUE

Then you know how I feel about this place.

Preston does what he does best and watches silently.

Sue takes off the headphones, but stops, something thought seems to have struck her.

SUE

You save people on a regular basis.

She looks to him. This is important.

SUE

Where did I go wrong? Could I have saved him?

He's still as a statue.

She turns to leave, standing up and heading for the stairs, fed up with another answer not given.

PRESTON

No.

She seems taken aback. He actually answered?

SUE

So you don't think he could've been saved?

He doesn't answer. Only watches, as if to see her reaction.

She only gets worked up...

(CONTINUED)

...but then cools down.

SUE

I suppose that makes two of us. You know, it seemed like an answer to my prayers. Like some miracle.

She motions to the place.

SUE

And what was this place to you?

Preston still gives nothing.

Sue, finally fed up, realizes she's getting nowhere. She turns for the stairs.

PRESTON

I didn't say he couldn't be saved.

And Sue stops. And turns.

He waits and watches.

SUE

Then what are you saying?

Then he turns to the screen and picks up the remote.

He types in some numbers in the remote and the screen rewinds to a certain day. An image pops up on screen of a girl--but then cuts to black as Sue presses the power button on the monitor.

SUE

All due respect, but I'm tired. I appreciate what you did, but I'm done playing this game. Either tell me what you want from me or I'm leaving.

This is the moment...and Preston remains silent.

SUE

Then leaving it is.

She turns for the stairs and makes her way up and out, Preston watching as she goes. Nope, he doesn't try to stop her.

GARTH (O.S.)

WAIT!

(CONTINUED)

Sue stops and turns around. Both her and Preston look to the dark, the source of the sound.

From the shadows, a silhouette stands out against the spotlight area.

From the shadows this figure, Garth, emerges, desperate.

GARTH

Please, don't leave. There's a lot of explaining to be done but in short I need your help and you both are going to need mine.

FADE TO BLACK

OVER BLACK:

SUPER:

"Chapter 4: The Other Deal"

Sound of the snowstorm hissing away. It's muffled as the sound of a giant curtain is closed.

INT. CONTROL ROOM

All is dark, except in the distance we can just make out the desk and computer spotlight. The lone figure of Simon, guitar in hand, heads towards the stairs.

GARTH (O.S.)

Wait. Wait! Simon!

The sound of Garth panting as we hear his footsteps run forth.

AT TABLE

Simon turns around. Do his ears deceive him?

From the darkness Garth's footsteps grow closer. He finally emerges into the light, taking in his new and mysterious surroundings, but staying mostly fixed on Simon. The table and monitor sit between them.

SIMON

So that was you following me?

GARTH

Simon, what's going on? Is this where you've been sneaking off to?

(CONTINUED)

SIMON

No one else was following you?
Right?

GARTH

No. But whatever you've been doing,
Simon, you need to come back right
now. It's only a matter of time
till--

SIMON

A matter of time till what Garth? I
thought you said no one followed--

GARTH

I'm not the only one whose noticed
you've been gone a lot, lately.

This gives pause to Simon.

SIMON

Who else?

GARTH

Take a guess.

EXT. SNOW WORLD - NIGHT

Snow rapidly falls from the sky, like black ash in the dead
of night. A staff sticks from the ground, the end emitting a
warm soft glow that falls on Garth, trying to battle his
nerves as he stands surrounded by a handful of authority
GUARDS decked out in black.

Garth watches as MARV, the intimidating patrol leader stands
at the doorway to the control room, holding the curtain door
aside and looking in.

As Marv peers in, the control room looks to be empty.

MARV

How long ago since he left?

GARTH

I don't know. A few weeks.

Marv turns around, letting the curtain door slide close. He
advances on Garth, his towering figure all the more
apparent. Garth tries to hold his own.

(CONTINUED)

MARV

And why are we just hearing about this now?

GARTH

I was hoping...

MARV

That he'd come back? Your hope appears to be in vain.

Garth, too afraid to speak now.

MARV

So, where did this brother of yours leave to?

This question sinks in for Garth.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Garth's face spells disbelief and annoyance.

GARTH

Up there?

Garth looks up the stairs.

GARTH

Simon, you got to be kidding.

Simon sighs, trying to be patient.

SIMON

Look, Garth--

GARTH

No, first it's the mind-reading computer...

(motions to monitor)

...and now you're saying this staircase leads to some secret world.

SIMON

Garth!

This finally gets Garth's attention.

SIMON

I get. Really. It's stupid. Ridiculous! It doesn't make any

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SIMON (cont'd)
sense. I wouldn't believe you if it were you telling me. But, it's not like I asked you to follow me here. And, I'm not asking your permission. You asked and I gave you an answer. That's where I'm leaving for.

GARTH
Okay, so even if it's true and you do make some kind of escape, you really think they won't come after you?

SIMON
They're not going to follow me up there.

EXT. SNOW WORLD - NIGHT

Marv takes a step away from Garth, gathering his thoughts.

MARV
He's right. We will not risk letting their people back into our world.

They both stand silent.

GARTH
There are others. That know about this place.

Marv twirls around. This has his attention.

MARV
Others from our world?

GARTH
No. From up there.

MARV
And have they found out about us?

GARTH
Not until I told them.

Marv takes a step forward, Garth peddling back in defense.

(CONTINUED)

GARTH

It's part of the plan!

MARV

Do you think it smart to further
test my patience?

GARTH

They haven't come here. I made a
deal with them. They think they
will be hunted for using the
control room. To assure their
safety I told them we'd make a
trade. They find my brother up
there and bring him back and
they're free to go.

Marv says nothing. This almost scares Garth more.

GARTH

They agreed.

MARV

We are destroying the place.
Whether he makes it back in time is
up to you.

GARTH

Yes, I will get him back. But I
need enough time.

MARV

Enough time?

GARTH

This plan, it requires that I need
this place open till April 15th.

MARV

Why then?

GARTH

It's the only day I'll actually
know where he'll be.

INT. CONTROL ROOM

Garth has lost any remnant of patience.

GARTH

A concert? So, that's why you're
leaving? To what...pursue some
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GARTH (cont'd)
dream of music? I can't believe you
Simon.

Simon waits for Garth to simmer down.

SIMON
Why do you want to stay?

GARTH
I have responsibilities here. YOU
have responsibilities here.

SIMON
Simon. There is nothing here.
NOTHING! You can't convince me
there is.

Garth is put on the defensive. He sighs.

GARTH
So when's this concert?

EXT. SNOW WORLD - NIGHT

Marv and Simon, still face to face.

MARV
Then you will have till midnight,
the 15th.

GARTH
Midnight? That's still not enough--

MARV
I have spared enough patience for
this mess. Midnight of the 15th.
You understand.

GARTH
Yes.

MARV
Do not think he won't pay for
abandoning us.

Simon hesitates. Marv doesn't like this.

GARTH
Okay, okay. Yes, I will find him
and bring him back.

(CONTINUED)

Marv, done with the conversation picks up the staff with the light and starts to leave, but turns for one last word.

MARV

Why didn't you just leave with him?

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Simon sighs.

Garth waits, eagerly for an answer.

GARTH

Simon. I...I told you, I can't.
This is my home.

SIMON

Look, Garth. I know we're different. But what happened to those times, we'd dream about getting out of here. It wasn't just me. You said yourself you'd take the chance if you got it.

GARTH

Then why didn't you ask me to come with you?

SIMON

I figured you'd say what you're saying now.

Garth, takes in the truth of this.

SIMON

You know, I had hoped this would happen. That you'd follow me here. That we'd have this conversation. I even practiced it out. What I would say.

GARTH

Going as expected?

SIMON

Yes and no. I expected about everything you've said. Which is why I never asked you to come here in the first place. But, there was just the faint hope that you'd actually listen. That I'd say just the write word or phrase and it'd

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SIMON (cont'd)
click for you. But I know that
there's no use trying. You're mind
is made up and so is mine.

GARTH
So, that's it. I can't make you do
anything and you can't make me do
anything.

SIMON
Garth, look me in the eyes.

GARTH
What, Simon--

SIMON
Garth. Come on. Just do it.

Garth does as Simon says, locking eyes with his brother.
Simon's eyes, sincere but firm.

SIMON
You're looking into the same eyes
as you're own, so if I'm lying you
ought to know.

Garth's eyes soften.

SIMON
I would give anything to have you
come with me. But I'm not going to
make you.

Garth's eyes falter.

GARTH
Simon...you know, I can't.

SIMON
I know that's why I'm not asking
you to.

This hits Garth. Hard.

SIMON
You know where to find me.

Simon turns to leave and Garth is left alone, at the edge of
the spotlight table and monitor.

FADE TO BLACK

(CONTINUED)

OVER BLACK:

SUPER:

"Chapter 5: The Answer"

The sound of a guitar tuning up.

STAGEHAND (O.S.)

You got 10 minutes, man. Then we
got to start letting people take
their seats.

SIMON (O.S.)

Sounds good. Just give me a knock
when there's a minute left and I'll
head backstage.

STAGEHAND (O.S.)

Yep. Sounds good.

SIMON (O.S.)

Sweet. Thanks.

The sound of a door opening and closing.

The guitar finishes tuning up and a chord strikes.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The chord rings out.

Simon sits in a chair spotlit on a stage.

From his POV only the first few rows can be see. Everything
fades into black.

He begins to play, finger picking a light by swelling intro
of acoustic sound. It gains more momentum...

...but stops abruptly with a wrong chord.

He looks to the seats. No crowd yet, but soon.

Simon looks to the door.

He settles back and gives it another shot. The song unfolds.
He's got it this time...

...but he hits another wrong chord.

His face is about to explode.

He looks over to the door. Sighs. Stressed.

(CONTINUED)

SIMON
(to self)
You can't be doing this man. You
can't. Be. Doing this.

He sighs and looks down at the guitar. He wags his hands, shaking off the nerves, limbering up, and resumes position.

His fingers rise into the first position on the fretboard.

His strumming hand gets into position as well, fingertips coming to rest on the strings.

Breathe in. Breath out. Eyes settle shut and remain so.

Fingers pick, strings respond. Fingers leisurely slide from chord to chord.

The song continues, Simon visibly getting more comfortably. His eyes remain close and the music flows from his fingers.

We push in past him into the dark.

A door in the back creaks open, light peaks in, and the silhouette of Preston in his vigilante garb.

He steps in, his silhouette against the bright backdrop of the stage. Simon plays away.

The black mask and its matted gleam watches ominously in the shadows.

From behind Simon everything in his empty audience appears black, including Preston.

Preston makes his way down the stairs as Simon's playing grows in intensity. Simon continues with his song, eyes still closed, lost in his own world. Preston makes it to the stairs on the outskirts of the stage and walks on up, sticking to the shadows.

The music intensifies.

Preston continues to creep up behind Simon.

Simon's hands are a blur of motion. His fingers slide up the neck, the sound a furious glissando.

The playing climaxes and ends with the strum of a full chord.

Preston stops. Standing behind Simon.

Preston's POV looks down at Simon, his prey. The POV transitions...

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

...on screen of the monitor. It's channel number is 24601. Preston's channel.

Wayne stands with a phone in one hand and the other on Nick's shoulder as he sits in the chair listening to the headphones.

WAYNE
(into phone)
Alright dude, you know the plan.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Close on Preston's ear underneath the balaclava. An headphone earpiece sits in his ear.

WAYNE
(through headpone)
Go for it.

Simon's eyes are still closed, he strums again but lighter. He commences into finger picking.

Preston doesn't move.

Simon's song begins to pick up momentum again.

We're drawn back into the music. Tensions heightening.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

The music carries over, becoming the score.

WAYNE
What's he doing?

Nick turns to Wayne concerned. Something's up.

WAYNE
(disbelief)
No he's not.

GARTH
He's not what?

(CONTINUED)

Garth and Sue watch from on the other side of the table. Garth especially on edge. Sue looks to him, watching his reaction.

Nick purses his lips. Wayne picks up on this.

WAYNE
He's going rogue.

GARTH
Who? Our man?

Wayne puts his finger up to shush him. Garth, on the verge of falling apart. Sue watches silently.

WAYNE
(into phone)
There is a plan B and you're not going to like it so please, man, stick to plan A.

ON MONITOR

Preston's POV doesn't change.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Preston's eyes are fearful behind that mask.

Simon picks faster and faster. His eyes closed and passionate.

Close on Preston's ear.

WAYNE
(through headphones)
Which is it going to be my man?

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Wayne, pleading.

WAYNE
Plan A? Or Plan B?

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Preston reaches in his pocket and pulls out his phone.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

On screen Preston's POV shows him holding up his phone.

Wayne's desperate, and it shows.

WAYNE
(into phone)
Dude! Please!

Garth watches, eagerly hoping for the best.

Preston presses the button.

WAYNE
(to Nick)
Plan B it is.

GARTH
What's plan B?

Wayne pulls down his mask. Ready to go. Nick responds in like.

WAYNE
Don't worry, my man. We'll bring
your twin back in one piece!

We see now that both are decked out in black jackets and pants. It's business time.

Garth and Sue watch as they leave.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Preston removes the earbuds from his ears and Simon's guitar playing fills in. It's all we hear now and it's marching forth.

Preston retracts out of the spotlight into the shadow on stage. Disappearing. An invisible watchful protector.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

Wayne and Nick dart across towards the auditorium as we pull back to reveal the robot they had just crawled out from.

Overhead we watch them run to the back doors.

Along the path lies a discarded flier for the concert, their feet stomping on it as they pass. We focus on the time which reads: "Starts at 8 pm! Be there or be square!"

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Simon's music has become a staccato angry march. Time drawing out between each dramatic chord strike.

One door in the back corner opens. Another dark-masked figure stands there. Nick. The door in the opposite corner opens and another figure stands ready. Wayne. They both enter, scoping out their prey.

Simon plays alone in the spotlight.

Nick's silhouette looks across to Wayne. Wayne's silhouette returns the look and nods. Both figures descend down the side stairs.

Simon's music picks up the pace again, the march filling in with fervent strumming.

Suddenly, a hand grasps out at Wayne's foot and he trips and falls. Preston pops up, the culprit and jumps forward.

Simon strums away, music intensifying.

Nick rushes over to aid Wayne. Wayne gets to his feet to follow after Preston. Preston makes a run for it. Preston hops over a railing, Nick and Wayne running into each other, Simon playing away in the background.

Simon's hands race away on the fretboard.

At one point two of the figures are tangled, wrestling. They stop, pull up their masks. It's Nick and Wayne, they both look up at Simon standing by the door...

...which suddenly opens! Simon hides behind the opened door. The Stagehand checking in.

Nick and Wayne duck behind some seats, watching it all take place.

(CONTINUED)

STAGEHAND

Simon! Five more minutes man. We got to start letting people get their seats.

Simon, thrown off from the interruption, nods.

SIMON

Um. Yeah. Yeah, definitely. Just five more minutes. That's all I need.

The Stagehand closes the door.

Simon breathes getting back in the mindset.

Nick and Wayne look at each other and back at Simon.

Preston waits in the shadows.

Simon begins strumming the main theme again, starting right back up where he left off. He closes his eyes again, melting into the music.

Wayne motions to Nick and they both spread to opposite sides of the stage. They halt, because there he is. Behind Simon Preston emerges, standing on guard.

Nick's eyes lock on Simon. Wayne's lock as well.

They both advance up the stairs.

The music is coming to its climax.

Nick and Wayne take their positions on opposite sides of Simon, Preston still at guard behind him.

The showdown has begun. Nobody makes a move. Simon races away on the fretboard, consumed by his music. It's *The Good*, *The Bad*, and *The Ugly* on stage, the musician the object of their desire.

Suddenly, the climactic chord strikes.

The glances are thrown.

Nick. Wayne. Preston. Wayne. Nick. Preston.

Simon brings the song to a close with some light strumming.

Then, the final chord.

Simon smiles, almost shaking. He made it. His eyes open and he looks up.

(CONTINUED)

Simon's POV shows the empty stands. He looks over and sees a black masked figure! It's Nick to his right.

Simon's face is shocked to say the least.

His POV then looks to his left and Wayne is there masked as well.

Simon's face doesn't grow any less shocked.

His POV then turns to look behind him. Standing over him is Preston.

Against the wide backdrop of the darkened auditorium, the four stand frozen in position.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The Stagehand pushes through the doors. The sound of a gathering sound comes from behind.

STAGEHAND

Alright man! Time to get the show
on the road. We're letting people
in now--

The sight he finds is not one he expected. The guitar, abandoned on stage. Two masked figures are laid out on the stage, aching in pain. They pull themselves up and look at the Stagehand. And then they look at each other. Oh crap.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Sue sits at the desk, headphones on. Garth stands over her, trying to make out what's happening. Sue has her phone up to her head.

SUE

(into phone; to self)
Come on, pick up Preston.

On screen Preston's POV shows him in the dark outside, carrying Simon in his arms, and setting him down.

GARTH

This is a mess.

Sue's phone continues to ring.

(CONTINUED)

GARTH
Why's he not picking up?

On screen Preston's POV shows him pick up the phone.

Garth's eyes light up.

GARTH
Come on! Yes--

Preston cancels the call and returns the phone back to his pocket.

Garth is crestfallen. He withdraws and walks to the edge of the shadows, Sue watches cautiously, studying his every move.

GARTH
What time is it?

Sue checks her phone.

SUE
9:15.

He sighs. And walks around, taking a seat in the other open seat.

Sue watches him. She knows what defeat feels like.

GARTH
So, this is how it feels to watch something completely fall apart.

Sue doesn't know what to say.

Garth turns and stares off into the darkness, possibly the doorway he came from? The weight of the world seems to be unloading on him.

Sue, neither friend nor enemy at this point, continues to watch helplessly.

GARTH
You can leave.

Sue, shocked, doesn't know whether to believe it.

GARTH
You can leave. Really. I lied to you. And then. No one is coming after you. None of you are actually in danger. I used you all to by
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GARTH (cont'd)
some miracle get my brother back
home. The truth is, out that way
(motions to dark)
is a doorway to the world I come
from and back there
(motions to stairs)
is a doorway to where you came
from. And I know where I'll have to
head back and it's pretty obvious
at this point which way my brother
will be heading. And, in a matter
of hours when the only bridge to
both our worlds is destroyed, we
will be stuck with our own separate
choices, never to see each other
again. I am not content with that.
So go ahead, tell me I'm selfish. I
know I am.

His face losing it's composure, looking to her almost
pathetically.

GARTH
But I'm mostly just scared.

Sue is...angry, confused, even...sympathetic? What the heck
does she make of this?

He just returns his stare forward blankly into the darkness.

He turns back to her, then sighs.

GARTH
Again, feel free to leave anytime.

Sue watches him, not sure what to say. But an idea comes to
her.

SUE
Wait.

She turns to the monitor, a last ditch effort.

Grabs for the remote and starts punching in buttons. Garth
watches her. What's the point?

On the screen a past time stamp shows. It's the same one
Preston had tried to show her earlier. The same moment
appears on screen. The girl's face.

Sue raises the remote, ready to press play.

But she doesn't.

(CONTINUED)

She looks to him.

Garth watches, curious.

She instead puts the remote down.

GARTH

What's all that about?

SUE

Look, I know what it's like to run out of time. I do. To let a loved one slip away from you. I had a brother and as we drifted apart he chose to make decisions I thought...well, I thought were going to get him killed. So, when I came upon this place, I thought "Jeez, this must be the silver lining. I can get in his shoes and figure out what's wrong him and then I could fix it". And so I decided to break character for once and actually speak up. Speaking up quickly turned to fighting. And fighting soon turned to not talking at all. Not soon after that he died in an accident and the last things we said to each other were out of anger.

GARTH

I'm sorry.

SUE

What was I supposed to learn from it? I mean, if you can't save someone you love then what's the point...

GARTH

What's the point in loving them?

SUE

Sounds kind've dumb saying it out loud.

GARTH

No.

SUE

The night you found us, Preston wanted to show me this. I think it was his answer to me.

(CONTINUED)

Pointing to the screen. She then leans over and turns off the screen.

Sue stands up. Garth watches, hesitantly.

SUE

I don't know you. I don't know your brother. And I'm pissed that you dragged me back down to this place.

(calms)

But tell me right now. Do you want me to leave? Because I will. But if you want me to stay I will stay. That is the best answer I've got right now. But when the time's up, I've got to go.

Garth lets the offer sink in.

EXT. SNOW LAND - DAY

Marv stands surrounded by a small pack of guards.

MARV

It's time.

He signals forth.

The peel aside the curtain and enter into the control room.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

As the guards flood in.

They all come to a stop, Marv entering in and taking in his surroundings.

GUARD

Nobody's here from the looks of it, sir.

Marv ponders this.

MARV

Well, it looks like he's made his decision.

He turns to leave.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

55.

MARV
Destroy it.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

We pull back from the small robot like object guarding the parking garage.

FADE OUT